

# CHRISTIANITY TODAY



||| A PRESBYTERIAN JOURNAL DEVOTED TO STATING, DEFENDING  
AND FURTHERING THE GOSPEL IN THE MODERN WORLD |||

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Published monthly by  
THE PRESBYTERIAN AND  
REFORMED PUBLISHING CO.,  
501 Witherspoon Bldg., Phila., Pa.

MID-MARCH, 1931  
Vol. 1 No. 11

\$1.00 A YEAR  
EVERYWHERE

## The Bodily Resurrection of Our Lord: Its Importance

THE General Assembly has repeatedly affirmed that it is an essential article of Christian faith that our LORD JESUS CHRIST "rose again from the dead with the same body with which He suffered." The fact that the General Assembly has deemed it necessary to make such a pronouncement bears witness to the fact that even within the Presbyterian Church there are many who do not hold this opinion concerning the place that the bodily resurrection of CHRIST occupies in Christian thought and life. Within the memory of living men His resurrection—meaning of course, His bodily resurrection—was regarded by friend and foe alike as an article of a standing or falling Christianity. Our fathers, certainly our grandfathers, whether they were Christians or non-Christians, would have been practically unanimous in approving the representation of the late DR. FAIRBAIRN:

"The resurrection created the church, the risen CHRIST made Christianity, and even now the Christian faith stands or falls with Him. If it be proved that no living CHRIST issued from the tomb of JOSEPH, then that tomb becomes the grave not only of a man, but of a religion, with all the hopes built on it and all the splendid enthusiasms it has inspired."

Today, however, there are many calling themselves Christians—and apparently their number is on the increase—who, so far from looking upon CHRIST's resurrection as an article of a standing or

falling Christianity, maintain that it can be discarded altogether without sacrificing anything essential to Christian faith. This, if we mistake not, is one of the fruits of that anti-supernaturalism of thought and sentiment that has become so dominant in recent years even among those calling themselves Christians. In the nature of the case, just as the "non-miraculous Christianity," so much in vogue today, cannot allow that an event so obviously miraculous is needed to account for the origin of Christianity, so it cannot possibly allow that confidence in its reality is fundamental to the Christian's life and hope. Be this as may, we are fully persuaded that those who take this new attitude toward the resurrection of CHRIST are profoundly mistaken, and that as a matter of fact His resurrection

is so essential to Christian faith and hope as to warrant the strong language of PAUL:

"If CHRIST be not risen, then is our preaching vain, and our faith is also vain. Yea, and we are found false witnesses of GOD; because we have testified of GOD that He raised up CHRIST whom He raised not up, if so be that the dead rise not. For if the dead rise not, then is not CHRIST raised: and if CHRIST be not raised, your faith is vain; ye are yet in your sins."

The basic question at issue in this connection is, of course, the question, Did JESUS really rise from the dead? That is not the question before us now, however. The question before us is rather, assuming the reality of this event does it so enter into the substance of Christianity as to constitute an indispensable element in the religion we profess? It need not be overlooked, however, that, if the resurrection of JESUS is essential to Christianity, the whole mass of that evidence that evinces the truth of Christianity also evinces the reality of the resurrection.

It is impossible in the space at our disposal to even mention all the ways in which the resurrection of JESUS enters as a constitutive and indispensable element in making Christianity what it is. All we can hope to do is to direct attention to some of the more outstanding considerations which make clear that the resurrection of CHRIST is essential to Christian faith and hope.

### IN THIS ISSUE:

Is the Northern Church Theologically Sound?—Editorial Comment.....	3
Let the Orthodox Unite!.....	6
John Clover Monsma	
What is Truth?.....	8
R. B. Kuiper	
Letters to the Editor.....	10
Notes on Biblical Exposition.....	12
J. Gresham Machen	
Books of Religious Significance.....	14
Ministerial Changes.....	16
News of the Church.....	17

# "Is the Northern Church Theologically Sound?"

## EDITORIAL COMMENT

UNDER the title "Is the Northern Church Theologically Sound?" Dr. ERNEST TRICE THOMPSON, Professor of Church History in Union Theological Seminary, Richmond, Va., has written a twenty-five page article that appears in the January issue of the *Union Seminary Review*. This article has been written in the interest of the proposed union of the Presbyterian and Reformed Churches of America, more particularly for the purpose of removing what he has found to be the chief obstacle in the way of such a union on the part of Southern Presbyterians. "The argument against union," he writes, "that seems to carry the most weight is the doctrinal argument, not so much an argument as a fear that the Presbyterian Church in the U. S. A. (Northern) is unsound in the faith." Dr. THOMPSON maintains that this fear is groundless and that the events in the Northern Church which have aroused the suspicions of many in the Southern Church, rightly understood and fairly interpreted, indicate that "our sister denomination is fundamentally sound in the faith." In the course of his article Dr. THOMPSON reviews and expounds those developments in the Northern Church that have done most to arouse the fears of his own brethren—from the BRIGGS trial in 1892 to the reorganization of Princeton Seminary in 1929. It may be added as a matter of information that the section of the article dealing with the Auburn Affirmation, which Dr. THOMPSON says is "the chief action cited to prove the unsoundness of the Northern Presbyterian Church," has been re-printed in substance in all the weekly papers of the Southern Presbyterian Church, viz., *The Presbyterian Standard*, *The Presbyterian of the South*, and *The Christian Observer*.

### Doctrinal Soundness Before 1924

Dr. THOMPSON has no difficulty in showing that previous to the publication of the Auburn Affirmation in January, 1924, nothing had happened that indicated any wide-spread unsoundness in the faith in the Northern Presbyterian Church. The reaction of the Church as a whole to the heretical teachings of Professors BRIGGS, SMITH and MCGIFFERT, especially their denials of the inerrancy of Scripture, indicates that during the closing decade of the nineteenth century the Northern Church was still sound in the faith. Again the outcome of the agitation for the revision of its standards which began in 1889 and culminated in 1903 evidences that the Church was still sound in

the faith during the opening decade of the twentieth century; for while opinion may differ as to whether the changes made in the standards in 1903 were improvements it is generally admitted that such revision of the standards as was adopted wrought no fundamental change in the doctrinal witness of the Church. Moreover the fact that the union with the Cumberland Church in 1906 was on the basis of the Westminster Standards, as revised in 1903, precludes any one from seeing in that union evidence of wide-spread theological unsoundness on the part of the Northern Church. Yet again the response of the Church at large in 1910, 1916 and 1923 to the actions of New York Presbytery indicates that whatever may have been true of New York Presbytery, and of individuals here and there throughout the Church, the Northern Presbyterian Church as a whole was still sound in the faith, or at least that nothing had happened as yet that justified an opinion to the contrary. In each of these years, as Dr. THOMPSON points out, the General Assembly reaffirmed its adherence to the historic standards of the Church and approved the declaration of the Assembly of 1910 with reference to certain articles of the faith that had been called in question, to wit:

"1. It is an essential doctrine of the Word of God and our standards that the Holy Spirit did so inspire, guide and move the writers of Holy Scripture as to keep them from error.

"2. It is an essential doctrine of the Word of God and our standards that our Lord Jesus Christ was born of the Virgin Mary.

"3. It is an essential doctrine of the Word of God and our standards that Christ offered up Himself a sacrifice to satisfy divine justice and to reconcile us to God.

"4. It is an essential doctrine of the Word of God and our standards concerning our Lord Jesus Christ, that on the third day He rose again from the dead with the same body with which He suffered, with which also He ascended into heaven, and there sitteth at the right hand of His Father, making intercession.

"5. It is an essential doctrine of the Word of God as the supreme standard of our faith that the Lord Jesus showed His power and love by working mighty miracles. This working was not contrary to nature, but superior to it."

### The Auburn "Affirmation" of 1924

It will be generally admitted, we believe, that previous to the appearance of the Auburn Affirmation nothing had happened that proved that the Presbyterian Church in the U. S. A. was unsound in the faith. There was indeed plenty to indicate that a considerable number of individuals were unsound in the faith, as judged by Presbyterian standards, but there was lacking definite proof of a wide-spread departure from orthodoxy. We submit, however, in opposition to Dr. THOMPSON, that what has happened since the Auburn Affirmation was first published in January, 1924, indicates the contrary, viz., that while there are still many in the Presbyterian Church in the U. S. A. who are fundamentally sound in the faith yet the majority—if we are to judge a church by its official acts—are rightly spoken of as unsound in the faith.

Whether we or whether Dr. THOMPSON is right in this connection hinges, it seems to us, on the question whether the fact that a man signed the Auburn Affirmation is conclusive proof that he is doctrinally unsound. If Dr. THOMPSON is right in maintaining that it is ignorance of the contents of the Auburn Affirmation, or worse, that lies back of all representations that said Affirmation offers proof that its signers are doctrinally unsound, we are willing to admit that evidence is lacking that proves that the Northern Church is fundamentally unsound in the faith. On the other hand, if the contents of the Auburn Affirmation are really such that it offers incontestable proof that its signers are doctrinally unsound, that fact in connection with the history of the Presbyterian Church since its publication offers, we believe, conclusive evidence that said Church, as judged by its official acts, is fundamentally unsound in the faith. A reference to some of the outstanding events since the publication of the Auburn Affirmation will indicate why we so judge.

### "Affirmationists" Become Dominant

When the Auburn Affirmation was first published in January, 1924, it contained but 150 names. As republished in May, 1924, however, it contained approximately 1300 names with the statement that "the Committee has certain knowledge, through many letters and conversations, that besides the signers there are in our church hundreds of Ministers who agree with and approve of the Affirmation, though they have refrained from signing it." Subsequent events would seem to indicate that the Committee might have used the word "thousands" instead of "hundreds" in the statement just cited and still kept within the truth. Certainly it was not long before those who agreed with or approved the Auburn Affirmation came to be not merely a party of protest but the dominant faction in the Presbyterian Church in the U. S. A. Dr. CLARENCE E. MACARTNEY was elected Moderator of the General As-

sembly in 1924 by a close vote but since that date no man has been elected Moderator who has not been acceptable to the Auburn Affirmationists. As matters now stand it is generally conceded that no man who has openly opposed the Auburn Affirmationists has any chance whatever of being elected Moderator of the General Assembly. What is more signers of the Auburn Affirmation in increasing numbers are being placed in positions of power and influence and honor in the Church and those who oppose said Affirmation relegated more and more to the background. At the last General Assembly three of the Chairmen of Standing Committees appointed by the Moderator were signers of the Auburn Affirmation and not one of them a man who in any vigorous way had opposed the Auburn Affirmationists. Moreover two out of the three Ministers elected to the Judicial Commission were signers of said Affirmation. What is even more significant a signer of the Auburn Affirmation was elected as editor of the *Presbyterian Magazine*, "*The Official Magazine of the Presbyterian Church in the U. S. A.*" Furthermore four of the fifteen ministerial members of the Board of Foreign Missions and seven of the sixteen ministerial members of the Board of National Missions are actual signers of the Auburn Affirmation, while those who have taken an attitude of pronounced opposition to it are so few as to have no real influence in their councils. Especially significant in this connection is the fact that the "Candidate Secretary" of the Board of Foreign Missions, the man whose function it is to interview candidates for the mission field and whose recommendations in the nature of the case has much to do with their acceptance or rejection by the Board, is a signer of the Auburn Affirmation. Perhaps the crowning evidence of the dominance of the Auburn Affirmationists and their sympathizers in the councils of the Presbyterian Church in the U. S. A. is supplied by the reorganization of Princeton Seminary in 1929 when the General Assembly took the control of that institution out of the hands of a Board of Directors, the majority of whom were openly opposed to the Auburn Affirmation, and placed it in the hands of a Board of Control acceptable to the Auburn Affirmationists. That we are not misrepresenting the new Board of Control at Princeton is indicated not so much by the fact that two of its members are signers of the Auburn Affirmation as by the fact that the Board as a whole in an official statement has commended these Auburn Affirmationists to the confidence of the Church. It may be added in this connection that the other leading Seminaries of the Northern Church—Chicago, San Francisco, Western and Auburn—not only have Auburn Affirmationists on their governing Boards but on their Faculties as well. More might be said, but surely enough has been said to make clear that if

the Auburn Affirmation itself offers evidence that its signers are unsound in the faith Dr. THOMPSON'S thesis that the Northern Presbyterian Church is fundamentally sound is untenable.

#### Are "Affirmationists" Sound in the Faith?

In view of what has been related it seems clear that the question whether conclusive proof exists that the Northern Church is theologically unsound hinges on the nature of the contents of the Auburn Affirmation. To show that a man can both be sound in the faith and a signer of the Auburn Affirmation would not indeed prove that everybody in that Church is theologically sound—Dr. THOMPSON does not allege that that is true of the Northern Church any more than he alleges that it is true of the Southern Church—but it would prove that the "chief evidence that is offered to prove the unsoundness of the Northern Presbyterian Church" is irrelevant and immaterial. In our judgment the Auburn Affirmation offers conclusive evidence that whatever may be true of the rank and file of the Presbyterian Church in the U. S. A. those dominant in its councils are unsound in the faith or at least indifferent to unsoundness in the faith on the part of others.

In expressing the above judgment, we would not be understood as implying that our reaction to the Auburn Affirmation is one wholly of dissent. It is true that the Presbyterian Church merely requires its Ministers to "receive and adopt the Confession of Faith as containing the system of doctrine taught in the Holy Scriptures" and that this does not, in the words of the Affirmation, "require their assent to the very words of the Confession, or to all its teachings, or to the interpretations of the Confession by individuals or church courts." It is also true that the Constitution of the Presbyterian Church can be lawfully amended only by concurrent action of the General Assembly and the Presbyteries; and hence that a mere deliverance by a General Assembly, or even a succession of General Assemblies, is without binding authority. We may be at some loss to understand why the Auburn Affirmationists should have felt it necessary to stress what as far as we know nobody ever denied—even the Philadelphia Overture of 1924 asking the General Assembly "to direct that all who represent the Church on the Boards, General Council, Theological Seminaries and every other agency of the Church be required to affirm or reaffirm their faith in the Standards of the Church, together with the historic interpretations as contained in the doctrinal deliverances of the General Assembly, notably that of 1910" expressly stated that said deliverances were regarded "not as an addition to or substitute for the doctrinal standards of the Church, but as a declaration that these doctrines as stated in said Standards are essential to the system of

doctrine taught in the Holy Scriptures"—but at any rate we are in full agreement with them as regards these two points.

#### The "Affirmation" as Repudiating the System of Doctrine of the Westminster Confession

But while it is true that the Presbyterian Church requires its Ministers to "receive and adopt" the Confession of Faith only in as far as it contains the system of doctrine taught in the Holy Scriptures, *it does require them to "receive and adopt" the Confession of Faith to that extent.* Obviously one cannot "receive and adopt" a system of doctrine and at the same time reject the individual articles that are essential and necessary to that system. That the Assemblies of 1910, 1916 and 1923 mentioned the five particular doctrines they did as essential doctrines finds its explanation wholly in the fact that these were the particular doctrines that were being questioned at that time. They did not assert or even imply that these were the only essential doctrines. Rather they expressly stated the contrary. But while they expressly stated that other articles of faith were "equally" essential and while they advised all the presbyteries to take care not to admit to the ministry those who did not accept "all the essential and necessary articles of the Confession" yet they did declare that "these five articles of faith are essential and necessary." Now, if the aforesaid Assemblies were right in holding that these articles of faith are "essential doctrines of the Word of God and our standards" it goes without saying that the signers of the Auburn Affirmation are unsound in the faith inasmuch as they maintain the contrary. This they do in language so clear and explicit as to leave no doubt as to their meaning. If any have read the Auburn Affirmation without realizing this, it must be because they have not read it in the light of the fact that the five doctrinal statements which the Auburn Affirmationists repudiate are the five doctrinal statements of the Assembly deliverances of 1910, 1916 and 1923. We would suggest to our readers, therefore, that before proceeding further they turn back and re-read the Assembly deliverance printed above in bold-faced type. Having done that they will be in better position to perceive the full significance of Section IV of the Auburn Affirmation, to wit;

"The General Assembly of 1923 expressed the opinion concerning five doctrinal statements that each one 'is an essential doctrine of the Word of God and our standards.' On the constitutional grounds, which we have described, we are opposed to any attempt to elevate these five doctrinal statements, or any of them, to the position of tests for ordination or for good standing in our Church.

"Furthermore, this opinion of the General Assembly attempts to commit our Church to certain theories concerning the

inspiration of the Bible, and the Incarnation, the Atonement, the Resurrection, and the Continuing Life and Supernatural Power of our Lord Jesus Christ. We all hold most earnestly to these great facts and doctrines; we all believe from our hearts that the writers of the Bible were inspired of God; that Jesus Christ was God manifest in the flesh; that God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto Himself, and through Him we have our redemption; that having died for our sins He rose from the dead and is our ever-living Saviour; that in His earthly ministry He wrought many mighty works, and by His vicarious death and unfailing presence He is able to save to the uttermost. Some of us regard the particular theories contained in the deliverance of the General Assembly of 1923 as satisfactory explanations of these facts and doctrines. But we are united in believing that these are not the only theories allowed by the Scriptures and our Standards as explanations of these facts and doctrines of our religion, and that all who hold these facts and doctrines, whatever theories they may employ to explain them, are worthy of all confidence and fellowship."

Dr. THOMPSON represents the matter as though the Auburn Affirmation was merely or at least mainly a protest against the assumption that the Constitution of the Church can be amended by Assembly action without the concurrent action of the Presbyteries. Such, however, is obviously not the case and would seem to indicate that he has read the first but not the second paragraph of Section IV of the Auburn Affirmation just cited. Had the Auburn Affirmation confined itself to an attack on the doctrinal deliverances of the Assemblies of 1910, 1916 and 1923 on constitutional grounds we might think it unwarranted but it would afford no warrant for asserting that its signers are doctrinally unsound; but the case is quite different in view of the fact that it went further and denied that its five doctrinal statements express essential doctrines of the Word of God and of the Standards of the Presbyterian Church, and so doctrines believed by the sincere and intelligent Ministers of said Church. It is not alleged, of course, that all the signers of the Auburn Affirmation reject these five statements as untrue but it is alleged that they all regard them as unessential. However vague the language of the Affirmation may be at many points, it is perfectly explicit at this point.

#### The Brief Confession of the Affirmation: Its Real Meaning

No doubt the sentence in the second paragraph of Section IV beginning "We all hold most earnestly to these great facts and doctrines" is fitted to lead the ordinary reader (though hardly a theological professor) to think that the Auburn Affirmationists are soundly orthodox, but if so it will be only

because they interpret it apart from its context. When it is interpreted, as it must be interpreted, in the light of the fact that its authors roundly declare that none of the five doctrines specified in the Assembly deliverance of 1923 need be believed even by Presbyterian Ministers, it is perfectly evident that such belief in the inspiration of the Bible as they profess is consistent with belief in its fallibility, that such belief in the Incarnation as they profess is consistent with disbelief in the Virgin Birth of our LORD, that such belief in the Atonement as they profess is consistent with disbelief in the notion that "CHRIST offered up Himself as a sacrifice to satisfy divine justice and to reconcile us to God," that such belief in the Continuing Life of our Lord as they hold is consistent with the belief that the body in which He suffered still lies in a Syrian grave, and that such belief in the supernatural power of our Lord as they hold is consistent with the belief that while during His earthly ministry He wrought "many mighty works" yet that He wrought no miracles. If the views expressed in Section IV of the Auburn Affirmation do not prove that its signers are unsound in the faith as judged by Presbyterian standards, we confess we are at a loss to know what would constitute such proof.

#### The Attack on the Inerrancy of Scripture

The Auburn Affirmation is particularly explicit in its rejection of the doctrine of Biblical infallibility. It affirms, in fact, that this doctrine is not only false but harmful. "The doctrine of inerrancy," says the Auburn Affirmation, "intended to enhance the authority of the Scriptures, in fact impairs their supreme authority for faith and life, and weakens the testimony of the church to the power of God unto salvation through JESUS CHRIST. We hold that the General Assembly of 1923, in asserting that 'the HOLY SPIRIT did so inspire, guide and move the writers of Holy Scripture as to keep them from error' spoke without warrant of the Scriptures and of the Confession of Faith." If space permitted it would be easily possible to show the falsity of every statement in the words just quoted. We must content ourselves however, with directing attention to the fact that the signers of the Auburn Affirmation—despite the fact that every Presbyterian Minister at his ordination affirms that he believes "the Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments to be the Word of God, the only infallible rule of faith and practice"—assert that the doctrine of Biblical infallibility is not only not an essential doctrine of the Word of God and our standards but that it is one that should be opposed on the ground that it is harmful in its effects. Shades of CHARLES A. BRIGGS and HENRY PRESERVED SMITH! They were suspended from the ministry of the Presbyterian Church mainly because they did not believe in the inerrancy of the original manuscripts of Scripture; and yet today

nearly 1300 Ministers of said Church proclaim such views and nothing is done about it unless it be to exalt some of the more outstanding of their number to positions of honor and influence in the Church. Surely if, as Dr. THOMPSON alleges, the reaction of the Church to the teachings of BRIGGS, SMITH and MCGIFFERT in the closing decade of the nineteenth century proves that the Church was then sound in the faith, its reaction to the teaching of the Auburn Affirmation proves that it is not sound in the faith at the present time!

Whatever else may be true about the Auburn Affirmation, it is at least certain (1) that it asserts that the doctrine of Biblical inerrancy is not only false but harmful and (2) that it asserts that such beliefs as the virgin birth of our Lord, His bodily resurrection (and by implication His return except in a spiritual sense) and His death as a sacrifice to satisfy divine justice and to reconcile us to God need not be held even by Presbyterian Ministers. And yet Dr. THOMPSON calmly assures his Southern brethren that the Auburn Affirmation "certainly cannot be taken as proof that a large number of its (Northern Church) Ministers . . . deny the fundamental doctrines of the faith."

#### Dr. Casper Wistar Hodge on the "Affirmation"

Here the words of Dr. CASPER WISTAR HODGE of Princeton Theological Seminary are much to the point and make clear that whether or not we approve the Auburn Affirmation, in as far as it was a protest against the right of the Assembly of 1923 to make the doctrinal deliverance it did, said Affirmation offers conclusive proof that all who approve it are unsound in the faith—and that to a serious degree. To quote Dr. HODGE.

"Whatever may be said as to the right of an Assembly to make any binding doctrinal declarations, the fact is that the plenary inspiration (and hence the inerrancy) of the Scriptures, the virgin birth and bodily resurrection of CHRIST, His substitutionary atonement by which He rendered a satisfaction to divine justice, and His personal return, are not only explicitly affirmed in the Westminster Confession, but are also essential to that common Christianity adhered to by the Romish, Greek, Lutheran and Reformed Churches, and essential to the Christianity of the New Testament. Two of these doctrines—the virgin birth and bodily resurrection of our Lord—were held to be essential to Christianity even by the Socinians who attacked the other doctrines of common Christianity and of Christendom."

#### The View of Dr. F. W. Loetscher

Surely Professor FREDERICK W. LOETSCHER, Professor of Church History in Princeton Seminary put it with all possible mildness,

and yet in a way that contradicts the representation given by the Professor of Church History in Union Seminary of Richmond, when he wrote:

"According to the Auburn Affirmation, there are apparently hundreds of our Ministers who, whatever may be their conception of the nature of their ordination vows, want liberty to hold, 'as explanations' of some of the fundamental 'facts and doctrines of our religion,' 'theories' which not only do not agree with, but flatly contradict, the sense in which our Church has always held these 'facts and doctrines.'" (*The Presbyterian*, Feb. 12, 1931.)

#### More Recent Events

Dr. THOMPSON also devotes considerable space to the Report of the Special Commission of Fifteen and the reorganization of Princeton Seminary with the purpose of showing that neither of these events afford any warrant for questioning the orthodoxy of the Northern Presbyterian Church. But, as we have already intimated in the case of the reorganization of Princeton Seminary, neither of these events has any independent significance in this connection. Most of the report of the Special Commission is taken up with matters that have no bearing on the matter now before us; and while the Special Commission put on record "its deep conviction that the great body of the Church is sound in the faith, even when that faith is judged by the strictest Standards" yet the question whether that conviction is well-grounded hinges on the nature of the Auburn Affirmation. If the Auburn Affirmation is theologically indifferent that conviction may rest on a solid basis of fact, but if, as we think we have abundantly shown, said Affirmation offers conclusive proof of the theological unsoundness of its signers and sympathizers, that conviction is quite untenable. What is true of the report of the Special Commission is also true of the reorganization of Princeton Seminary. If the placing of that institution under the control of a Board that is acceptable to Auburn Affirmationists involves nothing inimical to the continuance of its historic doctrinal position there may be no warrant for fearing for its future, but if the Auburn Affirmationists are as unsound in the faith as we have represented them it seems quite certain that the future of Princeton Seminary will be quite different from its past.

In concluding his article Dr. THOMPSON makes this significant remark: "We have not reported unsupported charges or criticisms, but have preferred to follow the actions of the Assembly itself, and the reports of responsible committees appointed by the Assembly." We wonder if Dr. THOMPSON is as naive and unsophisticated as this remark would seem to indicate. Apparently he is not aware that the Special Commission of Fifteen, in the judgment of many Pres-

byterians, was hand-picked for the purpose of securing a report that would be acceptable to the Auburn Affirmationists, more particularly that would be acceptable to New York Presbytery and thus prevent a threatened split in the Church. Apparently he is also unaware that the Committee appointed to investigate conditions at Princeton Seminary was a thoroughly partisan committee and that the report it presented was a thoroughly partisan report—a report moreover that has repeatedly been shown to abound in inaccuracies and misrepresentation of the grossest sort. The result is, of course, that Dr. THOMPSON, wittingly or unwittingly, has given us a purely *ex parte* account of these recent events in the Presbyterian Church in the U. S. A.

#### The Proposed Church Union

Dr. THOMPSON's article, as we have said, is written in the interest of the proposed union of the Presbyterian and Reformed Churches. If such a union is consummated, he says, "it will be on the basis of the historic standards; no other basis is considered." Such a representation, as was pointed out in the February issue of

CHRISTIANITY TODAY, is far from accurate inasmuch as the plan as proposed involves a wide departure from the existing standards of the Presbyterian Church (Northern and Southern) as regards both doctrine and polity. According to the historic standards Ministers are required to "receive and adopt the Confession of Faith as containing the system of doctrine taught in the Holy Scriptures"; but, according to the proposed plan, they will merely be required to "believe and acknowledge the fundamental doctrines of the Christian faith professed by the united church and contained in its standards"—a change so radical that it would virtually mean that Ministers of the united church need not be Calvinists. Again, according to the proposed plan, Ministers must promise to submit themselves in the spirit of meekness to the authority of the courts of the Church and "to follow no divisive courses"—a change that introduces something now lacking in our standards, viz., the doctrine of the infallibility of church courts, in face of the fact that had LUTHER and CALVIN and ZWINGLE and KNOX accepted the decisions of church courts as final there would have been no Presbyterian and Reformed churches.

## Let the Orthodox in the Presbyterian Church in the U. S. A. Unite!

### A Plea for a "Reformation Fellowship"

By the Rev. John Clover Monsma  
Formerly Editor of "The Ministers' Monthly"

THAT the morale of the orthodox forces in American Protestantism has been seriously impaired no honest observer, however staunch in the faith and sanguine as to its ultimate victory, can well deny.

There are certain deep-lying causes which could be dwelt on extensively. But that would carry us too far afield. In a book which the present writer has now in preparation and which Rae D. Henkle, Inc., Publishers, New York City, will bring out early next fall under the title "Principles and Methods of Church Reformation" the question of causes and remedies will be more broadly discussed.

There are a number of tactical mistakes, however, that in the writer's opinion the orthodox in their contest with the liberals have been constantly making and that have contributed not a little to the present doleful situation, and it is to these that the reader's attention is directed just now. That the Presbyterian Church, U. S. A., is singled out as the special field of observation and action should not affect the interest of readers of other communions. Much of the comment, we believe, will be found applicable to Protestantism in general.

One of the tactical mistakes referred to is the general habit of the orthodox to refer to themselves as "conservatives." There is an unfavorable tang to that name. It is frequently considered synonymous with non-progressives, stand-patters, religious anti-quaries, or something to that effect. It strikes people as being incongruous with our mentality, our peculiar national psychology. We are progressive, forward-looking. Why not use the name "orthodox," which simply means right and sound in doctrine, and which does not preclude, even by inference, true progress along straight lines and ambitious, lofty building on bed rock foundations? After all, we are far more aggressive in our plans and ideals than the liberals, liberal propaganda notwithstanding. Any other notion must be curbed, rather than thoughtlessly and carelessly helped along.

We of the Presbyterian Church, U. S. A., make another very serious mistake. We are frightfully careless in our choice of office-bearers, of pulpit-committees, and especially of commissioners to the General Assembly. The writer has been urged on several occasions to vote for this or that man as a commissioner to General Assembly because